

*Melancon Requested Hearing be Held in Louisiana*  
June 7, 2010

WASHINGTON D.C. – Today, U.S. Congressman Charlie Melancon (LA-03) participated in an Energy & Commerce Subcommittee Field Hearing held in Chalmette, Louisiana, to discuss the local impact of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The hearing examined the effects of the oil spill on the communities and environment of the Gulf Coast region.

In his opening statement, Congressman Melancon said, **“Mr. Chairman, hopefully this hearing and others like it will reveal the pattern of missteps and negligence that led to this continually growing catastrophe. Because as responders work as fast as possible to cap this well and protect our marshes, it is also important to identify what must change to keep another disaster like this from striking our fragile coast.**

Congressman Melancon continued, **“These rigs in the Gulf represent a tremendous segment of the economy in South Louisiana, and the sooner we ascertain the vulnerabilities, the sooner we can fix those problems and have our men and women working again in a safe environment.”**

Congressman Melancon's full statement as prepared for delivery is copied below.

Congressman Melancon, a member of the Energy & Commerce Committee, requested a field hearing be held in Louisiana so that those most affected by the oil disaster could participate. Invited witnesses include the widows of two workers killed in the April 20th explosion, a chemist, a fisherman, a local businessman impacted by the oil spill, and an expert on marine mammals. Brief biographies of the witnesses are below.

Congressman Melancon has been leading efforts in Louisiana to coordinate the private, federal, state, and local response to the oil leak caused by the explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil platform one month ago. He represents in Congress the areas of coastal Louisiana most directly affected by the oil leak, including Plaquemines, St. Bernard, Terrebonne, Lafourche and southern Jefferson Parishes. The Deepwater Horizon platform was located 50 miles off the coast of Louisiana's Third Congressional District.

**U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations**  
**Congressman Charlie Melancon's Opening Statement**  
**Monday June 7, 2010**

*Thank you Mr. Chairman.*

*I would like to start by thanking the Chairman, Ranking Member and each of my colleagues for taking the time and interest in my state, our people, our environment and our livelihood. Thank you for coming to this field hearing and working to ensure that a tragedy like this doesn't happen again.*

*The news coverage is constantly reminding us that we are facing the largest environmental*

*disaster in our nation's history. It is hard not to draw comparisons to a similarly grim milestone five years ago when this district – and our state – bore the brunt of the largest natural and man-made disaster in history as well.*

*I mention this association because it's easy to become distracted by the torrent of bad news that streams each night. But we're here today to help make sure that the effects of this tragedy on real people's lives aren't forgotten, and aren't repeated.*

*We need to make certain that the investigations into what went wrong are thoroughly carried out. And we must examine all solutions that may guard against a disaster like this ever happening again.*

*We are fortunate to have witnesses today who will share their heartbreaking stories with us. These stories are not easy to share, so I sincerely appreciate the willingness of the witnesses to come before this group and share their very personal accounts.*

*Mr. Chairman, hopefully this hearing and others like it will reveal the pattern of missteps and negligence that led to this continually growing catastrophe. Because as responders work as fast as possible to cap this well and protect our marshes, it is also important to identify what must change to keep another disaster like this from striking our fragile coast.*

*These rigs in the Gulf represent a tremendous segment of the economy in South Louisiana, and the sooner we ascertain the vulnerabilities, the sooner we can fix those problems and have our men and women working again in a safe environment.*

*I would also like to thank the expert witness panel for participating today.*

*I am afraid that when the cameras leave and national attention dies down, we in Louisiana will just be starting our cleanup and recovery. The toxic pollution in our Gulf waters could knock out our fisheries industry and way of life for years – if not decades – to come.*

*We need your expertise to help recognize the actions we can take to mitigate these scenarios and make our resources productive again as soon as possible.*

*Thank you.*

## **Witness Summaries**

### **Panel One**

Natalie Roshto's husband, Shane, was killed during the explosion. Shane and Natalie, 23, were married for 4 ½ years and have a 3-year-old child together.

Courtney Kemp's husband, Wyatt, was killed during the explosion. Wyatt and Courtney stated dating when they were sophomores in high school. They were married for 5 ½ years and have

a 3-year-old and a 4-month-old child.

## **Panel Two**

Wilma Subra is a chemist who provides technical assistance to the Louisiana Environmental Action Network. She has extensive knowledge of the human health and environmental effects associated with the spill.

Clarence "Ronnie" Duplessis is an oyster and shrimp fisherman from Davant, Louisiana, whose shrimping grounds and oyster beds have been closed, putting him out of work. He received \$5,000 from BP for his losses, and was promised additional payments in 2-3 weeks. It has been over a month and he has not heard anything from BP.

Kelby Linn is the President of ACP Real Estate, a beachfront property sale and rental agency, on Daulphin Island, Alabama. Oil has not yet hit the island, but they have already suffered significant financial harm due to negative press coverage suggesting the entire Gulf coast has been hit by the oil spill. Since May 1, 120-130 beachfront rental reservations have been cancelled.

Dr. Moby Solangi is founder, President and Executive Director of the Institute for Marine Mammal Studies in Gulfport, Mississippi. He wrote his thesis on the effects of Louisiana crude oil on fisheries. Oil has not hit the Mississippi coast, but Dr. Solangi believes that there are significant environmental harms for the entire Gulf region.

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